

Cultural Resources
Patrick Vegetation Management Specialist

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6/6/2020

Cultural Resources

Introduction

This section covers the existing condition and effects of implementation on cultural resources. Reports and analyses are in the Forest's cultural resource files.

Affected Environment

Prehistory

American Indian use in the project area included a seasonal round of hunting, fishing, and gathering. Deer, elk and other big game were hunted and continue to be a significant source of meat for tribal members today. Fishing took place in streams and rivers and continues to occur. Plants were, and are, gathered within the region by tribal members. Important vegetation of the Blue Mountain Province of the Columbian Basin physiographic area includes trees (ponderosa pine, grand fir, Douglas fir, and western larch), grasses and shrubs (bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, and bitterbrush), berries (strawberry, serviceberry, gooseberry, huckleberry, current, and chokecherry), and roots (camas, cous biscuitroot, bitterroot, wild carrot, and wild onion).

Prehistoric and historic American Indian cultural resource site types may include lithic scatters (chipped stone artifacts), resource utilization areas such as tool stone quarries and plant processing sites, seasonal camps such as small habitation areas or large villages, and special places. Special places may consist of sites and places that are valued for cultural, religious, or traditional importance (for example, traditional food locations such as berry areas, root gathering areas, medicinal plant grounds, and collection areas for materials for utilitarian and ceremonial craft production, as well as usual and customary hunting and fishing locations). Artifacts may include obsidian, chert, or basalt projectile points, knives, scrapers, burins, bi-faces, utilized flakes, and debitage. Bone tools, stone cobble tools, mortars and pestles, net sinkers, beads, and metal objects such as those relating to firearms may also be included in artifact assemblages.

History

Trappers and Protestant and Catholic missionaries began to arrive in the area in the early 1800s. In 1855, treaties were formed with the Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, and Nez Perce Tribes. The Forest Service, through the Secretary of Agriculture, is vested with statutory authority and responsibility for managing resources of the National Forests. Commensurate with the authority and responsibility to manage is the obligation to consult, cooperate, and coordinate with Indian tribes in developing and planning management decisions regarding resources on NFS lands that may affect tribal rights. The Patrick project planning area is within the interest areas of the Nez Perce Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR).

Persons who traveled to the Willamette Valley often passed through northeastern Oregon on the Oregon Trail. Settlements were not established in the area until the 1860s, at the same time gold began to be discovered. Gold mining created the need for new and larger settlements, such as Baker City to the northeast of the project area, and John Day, to the southwest. Gold camps stimulated the economy through their demand for food, living supplies, and mining equipment. The need for food brought ranchers to the area. Once the railroad reached the region, the lumber market grew. By the 1880s, lumber began to be shipped to distant markets. The town of Whitney, in the project vicinity, was a lumber town that was established along the Sumpter Valley Railroad in the early 1900s. Government administration by the Forest Service began in the area and is evidenced by the presence of structures such Antlers Guard Station.

Historic cultural resources include remains and records of the past that are at least 50 years old and that may be diagnostic of historic groups such as American Indians, European-Americans, or Chinese people. Cultural materials or locations show occupation and resource utilization of the Plateau region of the interior northwest. Sites may include campsites, trash dumps, log cabins, building complexes, mines, ditches, and railroads, and are most often related to homesteading, timber harvest, or mining activities. Artifacts may include notched logs or cut lumber, tin cans, bottles and jars, ceramics, and metal items such as tools.

Tribal Interest

Elements of respective American Indian cultures, such as tribal welfare, land, and resources, were sometimes entrusted to the United States government as a result of treaties. Trust responsibilities resulting from treaties dictate, in part, that the United States government facilitates the execution of treaty rights and traditional cultural practices of American Indians by working with them on a government-to-government basis in a manner that attempts a reasonable accommodation of their needs without compromising the legal positions of the respective tribes or the federal government. Specific treaty rights applicable to the land base managed by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest are generally articulated in Article III of the 1855 Nez Perce Treaty:

“The exclusive right of taking fish in all the streams where running through or bordering said reservation is further secured to said Indians: as also the right of taking fish at all usual and accustomed places in common with citizens of the territory, and of erecting temporary buildings for curing, together with the privilege of hunting, gathering roots and berries, and pasturing their horses and cattle upon open and unclaimed land.”

And as part of Article I of the 1855 Walla Walla, Cayuse, and Umatilla Treaty:

“Provided, also, That the exclusive right of taking fish in the streams running through and bordering said reservation is hereby secured to said Indians, and at all other usual and accustomed stations in common with citizens of the United states, and of erecting suitable buildings for curing the same; the privilege of hunting, gathering roots and berries and pasturing their stock on unclaimed lands in common with citizens, is also secured to them.”

Effects Analysis

The Patrick cultural resources analysis area encompasses the entire project area, which is also the Area of Potential Effect.

Identification of Cultural Resources

As prescribed by Forest Service and other federal guidelines, a cultural resource inventory was conducted in the project area. A literature review was completed, and survey was conducted during the 2017 through 2019 field seasons by Forest Service archaeologists and Eastern Oregon University. The Forest’s Survey Inventory Probability System was utilized to designate areas requiring coverage, and 20-meter transects were used. Survey covered approximately 12,000 acres, identified approximately 25 new sites, and monitored approximately 300 previously identified sites.

Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects on Cultural Resources

Alternative 1 – No Action

The Patrick project area has had numerous activities take place over the years. These activities have included timber harvest, road construction, mining, grazing, and recreation. Wildfire and prescribed fire

have also occurred. Foreseeable future management practices and activities would likely include the same types of actions.

During survey for the Patrick project, a number of newly located cultural sites were located in the project area and many sites were revisited. Many of the historic sites that were located and revisited were found to be in a state of decay. This decay is from natural causes.

Overall, there would be no change from the current condition. Sites would continue to gradually deteriorate over time, subject primarily to natural forces (i.e. weather conditions, unexpected wildfire, etc.). Activities such as grazing and recreating would continue to occur.

Under this alternative, no treatment activities would be undertaken; therefore, there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to cultural resources.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Vegetation management activities have the potential to damage or destroy cultural resource sites directly by heavy machinery, falling trees, road building, fuels treatments, etc., or indirectly as a result of discovery through increased access to sites, which in turn could lead to damage, destruction, or loss through looting. However, vegetation management activities can have a beneficial effect on cultural resource sites with regard to a decrease in potential for uncontrolled wildfire. Uncontrolled wildfire would completely destroy many of the historic cultural resource sites that exist in the project area. A reduction in fuels through vegetation management would mitigate this potential occurrence.

For the Patrick project, all unevaluated and eligible cultural resource sites other than historic linear resources would be avoided by ground disturbing activities with a 10 meter buffer zone. Ground disturbing activities for the project include such activities as mechanical timber harvest, new temporary road construction, mechanical fuels reduction, and fire line construction for prescribed fire. Limited activities may occur on historic linear resources such as ditches and railroads, and some lithic scatters may be burned over with low-intensity fast-moving prescribed fire.

The programmatic memorandums of agreement between the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office and the United States Forest Service regarding the management of historic water transportation ditches and historic railroads on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest are used as guidelines for protection of eligible or unevaluated ditches and railroads.

The Management Strategy for Treatment of Lithic Scatter Sites by the USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region provides guidance to avoid adversely affecting lithic scatter sites, including during prescribed fire activities.

Project Design Criteria to protect cultural resources are listed in Appendix B and apply to all action alternatives. Incorporation of these design criteria would minimize or eliminate potential adverse impacts to cultural resources. The intent is to protect cultural resources and to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act.

Cumulative effects of the proposed project and reasonably foreseeable future management practices would likely be beneficial to the protection of historic properties in that the Forest's cultural resource program is and would be involved in providing input to line officers regarding practices that allow for site protection. There have likely been some effects to cultural resource sites as a result of past management practices, particularly from activities completed prior to establishment of cultural resource protection laws, before sites were routinely avoided or otherwise protected. The greatest culmination of past, present, and future activities is potentially more access in areas which may not have seen much recent use. Greater access can potentially lead to effects on historic properties. However, with appropriate protection or mitigation, any

potential negative effects can be reduced or eliminated. It is expected that the cumulative effects of the Patrick project would most likely to be beneficial to historic properties through enhanced documentation and protection of historic properties.

Determination

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest zone archaeologist has determined that the Patrick project is considered an “undertaking” pursuant to the definition provided in section 301(7) of the National Historic Preservation Act. This undertaking will have a No Historic Properties Adversely Affected determination pursuant to 36 CFR 800 and Stipulation III(B)5 of the 2004 Forest Service/Oregon SHPO Programmatic Agreement.

A report containing the findings of the cultural resource survey for the Patrick project will be prepared and submitted to the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office and interested Tribes for review and comment.

Forest Plan Consistency

Alternatives would be consistent with the Wallowa-Whitman Land and Resource Management Plan as all cultural resource standards and guidelines would be met (USDA Forest Plan 1990).